

THE WHITE HOUSE

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President Obama and Vice President Biden Announce Investment in Transportation Infrastructure and Jobs for Americans

President Barack Obama and Vice President Biden today announced the release of \$28 billion from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) to states and local transportation authorities to repair and build highways, roads and bridges. This investment will lead to 150,000 jobs saved or created by the end of 2010. The President and Vice President were joined at the Department of Transportation by Secretary Ray LaHood.



State highway departments have already identified more than 100 transportation projects across the country, totaling more than \$750 million, where construction can start within the month. The U.S. Department of Transportation will monitor state compliance and track job creation, and information on the projects will be posted on [Recovery.gov](http://Recovery.gov).

Projects funded by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act will bear a newly-designed emblem. The emblem is a symbol of President Obama's commitment to the American people to invest their tax dollars wisely to put Americans back to work.

Remarks of President Barack Obama & Vice President Joe Biden  
Department of Transportation  
March 3, 2009

10:00 A.M. EST

THE VICE PRESIDENT: You need not stand for me. Thank you, thank you. Thank you very much. Mr. Secretary, thank you very much. And we're counting on you; we're counting on all of you in a way I don't think we've ever looked to the department before. We're counting on you. It's that simple, it's that straightforward. And I want to thank all of you in the Department of Transportation for your dedication and for the long hours you help -- you put in to make this announcement possible -- but the long hours you're going to be putting in.

Mr. President, when you signed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act into law, you made it absolutely clear that the American people could not wait -- could not wait for us to get started, and that they had a duty -- we had, you have -- the Department of Transportation, all of the federal government -- a duty and a responsibility to put to work the resources in the economic recovery package at a record speed and with record transparency.

Now, Mr. President, just two weeks after signing that legislation, we're about to start the biggest investment on our nation's road, bridges, highways and tunnels since we built the Interstate Highway System over 50 years ago. It's a big deal. The work is beginning now, with hundreds more projects getting underway in the next few months. Some project will start this month, some won't get going until

the summer. We're going to do everything we can to get them moving as quickly as possible. But Americans didn't get in this mess overnight. And unfortunately, unfortunately, it's going to take some time for us to get out of this.

Mr. President, you also made it clear that we have an obligation to the taxpayers of this nation to make sure their money is being used wisely, to make it accountable and transparent. Folks, we're going to ask of you a sense of diligence and transparency and responsibility as has not been asked before, because we've never made this kind of investment before. This is a big deal. Never before in the history of this country have the people been more able to see with such complete transparency how we're going to put their money to work, not just in this agency but particularly here.

Our web site, recovery.gov, is an unprecedented resource for the people to see how their money is being spent. And more than ever, more than ever, people can be our eyes and our ears. They can let us know what's happening, and maybe, just as importantly, what isn't happening in their communities.

I've always believed that the toughest moments present the biggest opportunities, and clearly, the President of the United States feels that way, as well. With this recovery package, we'll be creating jobs, saving jobs, and putting money in people's pockets. That's what this is about -- getting America moving again. And with the resources being allocated today, we won't only rebuild the roads and highways and bridges, we're going to rebuild this nation. This is the first step in rebuilding America.

And the man who is the chief architect of that rebuilding project I'd like to introduce to you now. Ladies and gentleman, your President and mine, the President of the United States of America, Barack Obama. (Applause.)

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you. Thank you, DOT. (Applause.) Thank you very much. Please, have a seat. Thank you. Vice President Biden, Secretary LaHood, our co-chairs of the TIGER team, Lana Hurdle and Joel Szabat. Thank you all for the extraordinary work that you guys are doing each and every day.

I want to begin with some plain talk: The economy's performance in the last quarter of 2008 was the worst in over 25 years. And, frankly, the first quarter of this year holds out little promise for better returns.

From Wall Street to Main Street to kitchen tables all across America, our economic challenge is clear. And now it is up to us to meet it.

One of the challenges is to jumpstart lending, so businesses and families can finance the purchases of everything from inventory and payroll to a home, a car, or a college education. We have to jumpstart the credit markets and get private lending going again. No matter how good of a job we do here, that's going to be critical. And that's why the Treasury and the Federal Reserve are launching today the Consumer and Business Lending Initiative, which, when fully implemented, will generate up to a trillion dollars of new lending for the American people. And this will help unlock our frozen credit markets, which is absolutely essential for economic recovery.

But we also know that there cannot be a sustained recovery unless and until we put Americans back to work and put money in their pockets.

Two weeks ago, I signed into law the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, the most sweeping economic recovery plan in history. And already, its impact is being felt across this nation. Hardworking families can now worry a little less about next month's bills because of the tax cut they'll soon find in the mail. Renewable energy companies that were once downsizing are now finding ways to expand. And transportation projects that were once on hold are now starting up again -- as part of the largest new investment in America's infrastructure since President Eisenhower built the Interstate Highway System.

Of the 3.5 million jobs that will be created and saved over the next two years as a result of this recovery

plan, 400,000 will be jobs rebuilding our crumbling roads, bridges, and schools, repairing our faulty levees and dams, connecting nearly every American to broadband, and upgrading the buses and trains that commuters take every day. Many of these projects will be coordinated by Secretary LaHood and all of you at the Department of Transportation. And I want you to know that the American public is grateful to public servants like you -- men and women whose work isn't always recognized, but whose jobs are critical to our nation's safety, security, and prosperity. You have never been more important than you are right now, and for that we are all grateful. (Applause.)

Now, in the coming days and weeks, my administration will be announcing more details about the kinds of transportation projects that will be launched as part of the recovery plan. But today, I want to speak about an investment we are making in one part of our infrastructure. Through the Recovery Act, we will be investing \$28 billion in our highways, money that every one of our 50 states can start using immediately to put people back to work. It's an investment being made at an unprecedented pace, thanks in large part to Joe Biden, who's leading the effort to get the money out the door quickly. Because of Joe, and because of all the governors and mayors, county and city officials who are helping implement this plan, I can say that 14 days after I signed our Recovery Act into law, we are seeing shovels hit the ground.

As Secretary LaHood noted, the first contract will be awarded to American Infrastructure, a family business in Pennsylvania that will be resurfacing a road in Maryland. More than 100 other people will begin receiving funds today, as well. Over the next few weeks, we will launch more than 200 construction projects across this country, fueling growth in an industry that's been hard hit by our economic crisis.

Altogether, this investment in highways will create or save 150,000 jobs by the end of next year, most of them in the private sector. (Applause.) And just to give you a sense of perspective, that's more jobs being created or saved in one year than GM, Ford, and Chrysler have lost in manufacturing over the past three years -- combined. The job -- the jobs that we're creating are good jobs that pay more than average; jobs grinding asphalt and paving roads, filling potholes, making street signs, repairing stop lights, replacing guard rails.

But what makes this investment so important is not simply that we will jumpstart job creation, or reduce the congestion that costs us nearly \$80 billion a year, or rebuild the aging roads that cost drivers billions more a year in upkeep. What makes it so important is that by investing in roads that have earned a grade of D- by America's leading civil engineers -- roads that should have been rebuilt long ago -- we can save some 14,000 men and women who lose their lives each year due to bad roads and driving conditions. Like a broken levee or a bridge with a shaky foundation, poor roads are a public hazard -- and we have a responsibility to fix them.

Now, we have another responsibility. Having inherited a trillion-dollar deficit that we're working to cut in half, we also need to ensure that tax dollars aren't wasted on projects that don't deliver results. And that's why, as part of his duty, Joe will keep an eye on how precious tax dollars are being spent. To you, he's Mr. Vice President, but around the White House, we call him the Sheriff -- (laughter) -- because if you're misusing taxpayer money, you'll have to answer to him.

And to help him, I've appointed a proven and aggressive Inspector General to root out waste and fraud. And I'm also deputizing every single American to visit a new website called [recovery.gov](http://recovery.gov) so you can see where your tax dollars are going and hold us accountable for results.

We're also making it easier for Americans to see what projects are being funded with their money as part of our recovery. So in the weeks to come, the signs denoting these projects are going to bear the new emblem of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. That's it right there. Transportation projects will be stamped with another emblem, as well. These emblems are symbols of our commitment to you, the American people -- a commitment to investing your tax dollars wisely, to put Americans to work doing the work that needs to be done. So when you see them on projects that your tax dollars made possible, let it be a reminder that our government -- your government -- is doing its part to put the economy back on the road of recovery.

And so, in the days and years ahead, as you're driving on new roads or roads that are newly paved, I hope it will give you some measure of satisfaction to know that it was all done by putting your fellow citizens to work. I hope it will give you a sense of pride to know that even as we pursued our economic recovery, we renewed our American landscape.

Throughout our history, there have been times when a generation of Americans seized the chance to remake the face of this nation. It's what we did in the midst of civil war by connecting our coasts with a transcontinental railroad. It's what we did in the midst of depression by putting up a golden bridge in San Francisco, and electrifying rural America, and completing a great dam in the Southwest. It's what we're doing once more -- by building a 21st century infrastructure that will make America's economy stronger and America's people safer.

That's the reason we're here today. That's the purpose of our recovery plan. That's the cause of my presidency, and I need it to be your cause, as well. Each and every one of you have a role to play. (Applause.)

There are those out there who say this can't be done -- it can't be done efficiently, it can't be done effectively. We've gone through a lot of years where we were told what government cannot do. Government can't do anything by itself, we've got to have the private sector involved. But there are critical things the government can do -- right here at the Department of Transportation. (Applause.)

Each and every one of you have a critical role to play. And if you do your work, if you do your job as well as you can do, if you feel as inspired as I do about the work that lies ahead, I'm absolutely confident that we're going to look back on this time and say to ourselves this was a moment where we really made a difference. What an extraordinary opportunity that is. I hope all of you seize it.

Thank you, everybody. God bless you. (Applause.)

END 10:12 A.M. EST